

MISSION the heartbeat of our church

August 2, 2009

Exodus 16:2-4; 9-15

Psalm 78:23-29

Ephesians 4:1-16

John 6:24-35

May the words of my mouth and the secret meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord our strength and redeemer. Amen.

I notice in this week's Chimes, the final versions of General Convention Resolutions D025 and C056 are available for you to read, mark and inwardly digest.. along with a letter of response from Bishop Howard.

Reading papers, and listening to the news, you might be forgiven for thinking this was the only issue considered at General Convention.

WRONG. MISSION is the heartbeat of our church.

Maybe you have not caught up with these basic facts: our delegates worked very hard!

419 resolutions were submitted to convention

covering almost 100 issues..

alphabetically from aging through to youth with many topics in between.

For example, in the area of environment, as a church we are asked to restrict the use of bottled water and all baptized Christians (that us!) are encouraged "*to practice simple energy and water conservation techniques so that, by working together, we may*

restore the beauty of God's creation and ensure that this resource may again be available to all God's children in abundance.”

Our MISSION to creation.

In areas that I might think of as pastoral care.. there were resolutions to:

1. Take direct action to improve the lives of wounded soldiers in their communities and, when asked, to advocate on their behalf with government agencies.
2. Seek to build caring pastoral relationships with wounded soldiers in their families, congregations, communities, or local hospitals.
3. Speak out clearly against the widespread practice of Domestic Violence; and covenant to pray for victims and their families;
4. Recognize the pressing challenges to those living in poverty and the working poor throughout this nation and call for new and innovative strategies to address issues related to nutrition, employment, childcare, education, healthcare, environment and housing, as well as equal protection under law and cultural affirmations...

Our MISSION to those who suffer from any form of violence.

Or in areas of international relations: there were individual resolutions relating to our concerns in: Cuba, Southern Sudan, Haiti, Honduras, Pakistan, and the Philippines..

And to put our money where our mouth is.. almost 2/3rds of the budget is dedicated to the mission and ministry of our church.

In addition we are asked to support World Mission “*by inviting contributions of eighty cents (or the equivalent in currencies other than U.S. dollars) per year for each year of the forthcoming*

triennium, from all baptized members of this Church who are also thereby members of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, with a goal of doubling missionaries of The Episcopal Church” I think I can give up part of a cup of coffee per year... or maybe I will give up a cup.. and give the 3 year commitment.. \$2.40 every year.

Our MISSION to people of the world.

The convention remembered there are people in our own neighborhoods that need good news and so is “*calling for the intentional exercise of the Baptismal Covenant promises in all sectors of public as well as private life;*”

you know.. continuing in the apostle’s teaching and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers; persevering against evil, proclaiming by word and example the Good News, serving Christ in all persons, striving for justice and peace, respecting the dignity of every human being...

And to encourage us, the convention accepted “A Charter for Lifelong Christian Formation”. “*informed by Scripture, Tradition and Reason.* [Resolution A082]

I have called you friends... John 15:14-16

Through The Episcopal Church, God INVITES all people:

§ To enter into a prayerful life of worship, continuous learning, intentional outreach, advocacy and service.

§ To hear the Word of God through scripture, to honor church teachings and continually to embrace the joy of Baptism and Eucharist, spreading the Good News of the risen Christ and ministering to all.

§ To respond to the needs of our constantly changing communities, as Jesus calls us, in ways that reflect our diversity and cultures as

we seek, wonder and discover together.

§ To hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people, placing ourselves in the stories of our faith, thereby empowering us to proclaim the Gospel message.

... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit... John 15:14-16

*Through The Episcopal Church, **God inspires** all people:*

§ To experience Anglican liturgy, which draws us closer to God, helps us discern God's will and encourages us to share our faith journeys.

§ To study Scripture, mindful of the context of our societies and cultures, calling us to seek truth anew while remaining fully present in the community of faith.

§ To develop new learning experiences, equipping disciples for life in a world of secular challenges and carefully listening for the words of modern sages who embody the teachings of Christ.

§ To prepare for a sustainable future by calling the community to become guardians of God's creation.

... I am giving you these commands that you may love one another... John 15:17

*Through The Episcopal Church, **God transforms** all people:*

§ By doing the work Jesus Christ calls us to do, living into the reality that we are all created in the image of God and carrying out God's work of reconciliation, love, forgiveness, healing, justice and peace.

§ By striving to be a loving and witnessing community, which faithfully confronts the tensions in the church and the world as we

struggle to live God's will.

§ By seeking out diverse and expansive ways to empower prophetic action, evangelism, advocacy and collaboration in our contemporary global context.

§ By holding all accountable to lift every voice in order to reconcile oppressed and oppressor to the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord..to read and study ...and to live it out locally”.

Our MISSION here in Tallahassee.

A survey of unchurched people responded they believed the church was more about religion than loving God. They are hungry for Jesus, the bread of life.

I often remember 5 year old David, who came to church with Ruby, an elderly neighbor.. kneeling at the altar.. reaching out his hands.. “Mother Phoebe, I’m hungry.”

So many people (like David) need what we’ve got. They are spiritual wayfarers who are already looking for us; who would love to join a church that’s ready to love them back. [The Episcopal Church has] a calling for the 21st century – and it’s the same calling it was for the 1st century ... We’ve got the knack of standing on two platforms at one time: of clinging to what’s eternal and of understanding what’s changing. (Ray Suarez)

We come to the altar to be fed, strengthened and equipped for mission and ministry, for the building up the body of Christ. Even at 5 David understood the words of Jesus... “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger.”

As INVITED, INSPIRED, TRANSFORMED people of God.. let us commit ourselves to MISSION and when we meet the spiritually hungry, share the good news.

Whoever you are God loves you... and whoever you are...ST
JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH WELCOMES YOU.

Come and share the bread of life.